

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY
INFO AMCONSUL MUNICH
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 102821

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: ETEL, SOPN, PFOR, PL, US

SUBJECT: RFE-GOP COMPLAINT

REF: WARSAW 1432; MUNICH 827; 1185, STATE 71354

1. D;M -OULD SEEK AN APPOINTMENT WITH DEPARTMENT III
DIRECTOR" AND EXPLAIN THA HE HAS BEEN ASKED BY BIB TO
DELIVER THE FOLLOWING NON-PAPER, READ THE PAPER, AND GIVE
SZEWCZYK A COPY.
BEGIN TEXT:

THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING WAS CREATED
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BY ACT OF CONGRESS IN 1973 TO "ENCOURAGE A CONSTRUCTIVE
DIALOG WITH THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN EUROPE AND THE UNION
OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS." CREATION OF THE BOARD
HAS BROUGHT INTO BEING COMPLETELY NEW PRINCIPLES GOVERNING
RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY BROADCASTS. THE ACT OF
1973 PRESCRIBES THAT RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY
BROADCASTS SHALL BE "WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROAD

FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED STATES." THE THOROUGH COVERAGE BY RADIO FREE EUROPE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO POLAND, INCLUDING THE MANY STATEMENTS ON BOTH THE POLISH AND THE AMERICAN SIDES WELCOMING A CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS, EXEMPLIFIES THE

INDEPENDENT BUT CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE WHICH THESE BROADCASTS CAN PLAY.

THE BOARD IS COMPOSED OF FIVE DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT WITH THE CONSENT OF THE SENATE. APPOINTMENT IN 1977 OF A FORMER AMBASSADOR TO POLAND, DR. JOHN A. GRONOUSKI, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, IS AN INDICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE "CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOG" MANDATED BY THE 1973 LAW, AND IN PARTICULAR TO THE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND POLAND.

THE BOARD HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT OF MISSION WHICH STIPULATES:

"...RFE AND RL DO NOT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH ANY OPPOSITION GROUP OR GROUPS, POLITICAL PARTY OR ORGANIZATION LOCATED INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE BROADCAST AREA. THEY ESPOUSE NO SINGLE SPECIFIC POLITICAL, ECONOMIC OR RELIGIOUS CREED. THEY
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ARE, HOWEVER, COMMITTED TO RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF OPINION, THE RULE OF LAW, AND NONDISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE, SEX, RELIGION, OR NATIONALITY. THEY ARE LIKEWISE COMMITTED TO THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE, GOODS AND IDEAS BETWEEN NATIONS, AND TO THE PEACEFUL NEGOTIATION OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS. BY MAINTAINING THESE VALUES AND OBSERVING HIGH STANDARDS OF ACCURACY, OBJECTIVITY AND TIMELINESS, RFE AND RL PROGRAMS SHOULD SEEK TO EARN THE RESPECT, IF NOT NECESSARILY THE AGREEMENT, OF PRESENT AND POTENTIAL LISTENERS FROM ALL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GROUPS..."

THE BOARD, WHICH IS CHARGED BY LAW WITH MAINTAINING CONTINUOUS OVERSIGHT OF RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY PROGRAMS, WELCOMES THE ATTENTION PAID BY THE GOVERNMENT OF POLAND TO SPECIFIC RFE BROADCASTS, AND THE PERIODIC COMMUNICATION OF ITS OBSERVATIONS, COMMENTS, AND--IF IT JUDGES THEM TO BE WARRANTED--COMPLAINTS ABOUT SUCH BROADCASTS. SUCH COMMUNICATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE

CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOG MANDATED BY LAW AND TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS PERSISTENTLY SOUGHT BY THE UNITED STATES.

THE BOARD HAS CAREFULLY REVIEWED THE RFE POLISH PROGRAMS CITED IN THE FEBRUARY 20 COMPLAINT IN THE LIGHT OF THE RFE/RL POLICY GUIDELINES FOR WHICH IT SHARES

RESPONSIBILITY, AND IN A SPIRIT OF WILLINGNESS TO RECTIFY ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED INCONSISTENT WITH THOSE GUIDELINES.

IT FINDS THAT CERTAIN COMMENTARIES UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECT KNOWN DIFFERENCES IN VALUES BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF THE UNITED STATES AND POLAND.

ALTHOUGH OPINIONS MAY LEGITIMATELY DIFFER AS TO WHETHER
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ONE OR ANOTHER PHRASE IN A PROGRAM WAS WELL CHOSEN, THE BOARD FINDS NOTHING WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY THE ALLEGATION OF AN "OFFENSIVE AGAINST POLAND."

IN THE CASE OF THE JANUARY 27 COMMENTARY ON CHANGES IN THE POLISH GOVERNMENT, THE BOARD ACCEPTS, ON REFLECTION, THAT THIS MAY HAVE LENT ITSELF TO MISINTERPRETATION AS AN ATTACK ON CERTAIN OFFICIAL PERSONALITIES. AS SUCH, IT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS A VIOLATION OF THE RFE/RL POLICY GUIDELINE ENJOINING THE RADIOS TO AVOID "ANY MATERIAL WHICH COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS PETTY GOSSIP, SLANDER, SPITEFUL REFERENCE TO OR ATTACK ON THE PERSONAL LIVES OR FAMILIES OF GOVERNMENT OR PARTY LEADERS, OR ON INDIVIDUALS AS SUCH." WHILE NOTING THAT THE COMMENTARY IN QUESTION WAS CLEARLY INTENDED TO BE HUMOROUS, AS WITNESS THE ATTRIBUTION TO "HABITUEES OF WARSAW CAFES," THE BOARD SIGNIFIES ITS INTENTION TO CONVEY TO THE MANAGEMENT OF RFE/RL, INC. ITS VIEW THAT PARTICULAR CAUTION MUST BE USED IN SUCH CASES.

AS FOR BROADCASTS ON THE ELECTIONS TO NATIONAL COUNCILS, THE BOARD FINDS THAT RFE COMMENTARIES WERE ACTUALLY MORE NUMEROUS AFTER THE ELECTIONS THAN BEFORE THEM. IT NOTES THAT PRE-ELECTION COMMENTARIES BEGAN ONLY ON THE FRIDAY NIGHT BEFORE THE SUNDAY ELECTIONS. IN DISCUSSING ELECTION PROCEDURES, RFE COMMENTARIES RELIED PRINCIPALLY ON THE LANGUAGE OF THE ELECTORAL LAW AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS, AS WELL AS THE VIEWS OF VARIOUS UNOFFICIAL POLISH SOCIAL GROUPS AND DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS (INCLUDING THE LETTER OF THE FORMER FIRST SECRETARY OF THE POLISH UNITED WORKERS PARTY, MR. OCHAB, AND ASSOCIATES). BIB BELIEVES THOSE
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POLISH VOTERS ALREADY INCLINED TO DELETE NAMES OF CERTAIN CANDIDATES OR TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS OUTRIGHT MIGHT HAVE FOUND IMPLICIT ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION IN TWO OF THE RFE COMMENTARIES. HOWEVER, BIB FINDS NO EVIDENCE THAT IT WAS THE INTENTION OF ANY BROADCAST TO STIMULATE SUCH ACTION. THE BOARD FEELS THAT THE BASIC DIFFERENCE OF VIEWPOINT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF POLAND FLOWS FROM THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO POLITICAL SYSTEMS.

RFE REPORTS AND COMMENTARIES OF FEBRUARY 13-14, DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT "POLISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN KRAKOW WERE GUILTY OF LAWLESSNESS AND THAT A POLISH CITIZEN, MR. MICHNIK, WAS BRUTALLY BEATEN," WERE BASED ON COPIOUS REPORTS FROM FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ACCREDITED IN POLAND -- REPORTS BASED ON INTERVIEWS (INCLUDING LIVE TELEVISION INTERVIEWS) WITH ASSOCIATES OF MR. MICHNIK AND EYEWITNESSES TO THE INCIDENTS.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, THE BOARD WISHES TO REMIND THE GOVERNMENT OF POLAND OF THE PROPOSAL FOR "RIGHT OF REPLY" MADE IN THE BOARD'S FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT. DEVELOPMENT OF A PROCEDURE FOR POLISH OFFICIALS TO RESPOND TO INACCURACIES WHERE THEY OCCUR ON THE STATION ORIGINATING THE BROADCASTS, COUPLED WITH AN END TO INTERFERENCE BY POLISH AGENCIES WITH RECEPTION OF THOSE BROADCASTS, WOULD BE, IN OUR JUDGMENT, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.

IN CONCLUSION, THE BOARD WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS REGRET AT AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE NEWSPAPER ZOLNIERZ WOLNOSCI OF FEBRUARY 8 UNDER THE SIGNATURE OF W. ZIELINSKI. THE BOARD FINDS UNHELPFUL TO THE CAUSE OF POLISH-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLIED COMPARISON WITH JOSEPH GOEBBELS OF ITS CHAIRMAN, FORMER AMBASSADOR GRONOUSKI, A COMBAT VETERAN OF

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WORLD WAR II AND DEVOTED ADVOCATE OF POLISH-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP. THE BOARD FINDS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING THE REITERATION OF AN ALLEGATION THAT RFE AND RL HAVE REMAINED UNDER C.I.A. CONTROL, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF POLAND MUST BE AWARE THAT THIS ALLEGATION HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN UNEQUIVOCALLY AND

CATEGORICALLY DENIED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND BOTH FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEES OF THE U.S. CONGRESS. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE RIGHT OF POLISH MEDIA TO EXPRESS CRITICISM, THE BOARD EXPECTS THAT POLISH AUTHORITIES WILL MAKE CLEAR TO POLISH JOURNALISTS THE PRECISE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH HAVE GOVERNED THE RADIOS SINCE 1973, AND OFFERS ITS ASSISTANCE IN PROVIDING ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION. END TEXT.

2. FOR MUNICH: ABOVE WAS APPROVED BY ALL BIB MEMBERS. JOHN HAYES, CHAIRMAN OF RFE/RL BOARD CLEARED IT. ALEX BUCHAN AND WILLIAM BUELL READ IT BEFORE TRANS-MISSION.

3. FOR WARSAW: YOU MAY WISH ALSO TO LEAVE WITH ZDZISLAW SZEWCZYK A COPY OF THE RFE/RL PROGRAM GUIDELINES THAT ARE AVAILABLE AS AN APPENDIX TO THE B.I.B.'S 4TH ANNUAL REPORT.

4. YOU MAY INFORM THE GOP THAT THE RFE/RL MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THIS REPLY BUT THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION TO SHARE THE TEXT OR EVEN THE FACT OF THIS EXCHANGE WITH THE STAFF OF THE POLISH BROADCAST SERVICE. CHRISTOPHER

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